

Matthew 28:16-20
Why the Two Questions? To Make Disciples!
Sunday July 23rd, 2017

A story comes to us out of the South where yearly revivals followed by baptisms are quite common. In one small community, year after year following the revival, a man named Joe would come forward to be baptized. Joe would then, after a short time of righteous living, backslid into his old ways of sin.

All this small community knew Joe and of his many conversions and backsliding into sin. So one year, as Joe was again about to be baptized and the Revivalist had once again proclaimed Joe would be filled with the Holy Spirit; a voice quipped from the back, "Don't do it! He Leaks!!"

My friends, we all leak, we all seem to lose the faith we once knew and turn from the message we've received. That is why we need the fellowship and encouragement of other believers to grow as a disciple of Jesus. That is why the circle of renewal I introduced you to last week can be such an important tool helping us to turn to God day after day, and not let the experience of the Holy Spirit we've had slowly leak away.

When God speaks and we respond by **observing** that, **reflecting** on it and **discussing** it with others; we can be brought to the point of faith. That's where we make **plans** to change our lives, and we determine a way to hold us **accountable** to those plans or be encouraged in them and then we **act** and keep on acting. I believe if Joe, in my story, had a group of Christians he could have shared his struggles with, they could have encouraged him to not leak and retain the Spirit's instruction and power in his life.

Christianity is a group or team sport. Note in Mt. 28:19 that Jesus sent a team of players into the world to do his work and will. And he sent his disciples not just to individuals, but to **"all nations", all peoples.** We call people into discipleship where words from God can be discussed and we can be encouraged to obey. We are sent from a group, "the Church" to a group a nation or people, or for most of us just an individual person.

And as individuals become Disciples of Christ they form up into groups. It could be just 2 people, or 10 in a Bible Study, or 40 in a choir, or a worship service of 1,000. We are sent from a group and through our efforts to make disciples, we form groups. It is natural. It is the way Jesus did it.

It is the way the early Methodist movement exploded in growth first across England, then the Americas, Africa where they are growing exponentially, and to the whole world where today about 85million people claim the name of Jesus as his disciples.

In the Gospel reading Jesus said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,..”** Note this is one of the clearest delineations of the concept of the Trinity in the New Testament. Jesus doesn't say, “Baptizing them in the name(s) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but simply “the Name”. Note also that Jesus has the very power and authority of God because **“all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him.”**

The way the Greek is laid out holds some scary stuff for us. **When Jesus claims all authority he also bestows that on us when he says “Go!”** We have the authority, power and presence of God with us when we go out to make disciples. This is our mission this is what is called **“The Great Commission”** in most Bibles. It is where we get our mission as the United Methodist Church, **“To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”** Say that with me.

Disciples transform the world. People become disciples first and then they form churches that transform the world.

We are to go! We are not to just sit behind the walls of our beautiful sanctuary and think because we have built it they will come. We need to go out, to reach out, to advertise and invite, and be inviting, loving and positive when people show up.

I had a tremendous Kairos moment while on vacation. You see the truth is I hardly ever stop thinking about the people and place I minister

to even when I am away. I was out walking early in the morning, walking early, because by 6:30am it was already 85 and 85% humidity.

I was thinking about the Live Streaming and the many little communities in Arizona that do not have a United Methodist church presence. It came to me we could recruit homes or a classroom in a school to host gatherings for the Live Stream worship that is going on right here at Vista Church.

When that idea came to me I got goose-bumps on goose-bumps. That's hard to do when it is 85 and 85% humidity. It was a tremendous Kairos moment. I believe God has given us a new technology that inexpensively can allow us to go out with the worship and word of God to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

I envision it in gathered groups of people, because again Christianity is a team sport, and disciples naturally gather together to encourage one another in their growth. Worship together is simply powerful, and it is what the disciples did in our scripture when they recognized it was Jesus. **“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”**

Well I reflected on this idea of Live Streaming to communities up what we call “The Copper Trail”, which may be our Cornwall England. I discussed it last Tuesday with the Church Council and they unanimously and very enthusiastically adopted this as a mission of our church. This is exactly what they adopted: **Pursue “Live streaming” to bring United Methodist Fellowships into existence in the towns and communities north of Vista Church such as: Oracle, San Manuel, Mammoth, Dudleyville, Winkelman etc. Start with one site and advertise in area. Would need a place to meet with a good internet connection, friendly hosts/hostesses, equipment etc. The cost would be???**

Note how the Circle of Renewal and the two questions has guided us so far: I and the council observed this God given idea breaking into our calm and placid world. We reflected on it. We discussed it. We decided to act on it, and immediately began recruiting people to help put this idea into place.

The “**Account**” part or “Accountable” part of the circle I actually like to call “**Encouragement**”. This is where the Barnabases step forward to encourage the process along and then we will **act**. We are answering the two questions “What is God saying to you? And what are you going to do?”

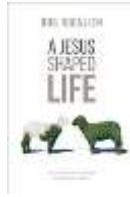
Now do we know completely where we are going and how well this is going to be received in each community? No! Do we know all the steps and people and resources and even approaches to make this work? No! But we have taken the first step. It’s a little step following the light that God has given us, but it is the first step in what I believe will be a very exciting journey.

Here’s the part where you begin to ask the question, “What is God saying to me?” Where do you believe you could help out in this mission? Do you know people places or things that would help us do this? Would you be willing on an occasion to take a Sunday morning drive to help some people join us remotely in worship here? We need your help and ideas. God has spoken how are you going to respond? If your answer to God is I want to help, write your name down and give it to me or our Lay Leader Jim Bleess and let’s get going.

I believe we will need people with very different giftings from those who are very technologically gifted to those who are very socially gifted and many other types of workers.

Back to the text. Making disciples is an ongoing process. Once we invite someone to Christ, or into Church, or Christian fellowship for them that is a Kairos moment. They enter the circle and we need to enter the circle with them. They at that point become sheep and we the shepherd. The invitation begins with individuals and individuals respond, but the invitation is also to peoples and nations. We will probably send a post card to all the residents of one of these towns to invite them in.

Discipleship is not a one act decision. It’s an ongoing process of going round and round the circle drawing closer and closer to God. (Here’s where we should sing ‘We are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder’) and as we grow closer to God we begin to look more like Jesus the Lamb of God.



Here is the cover of a book by a friend of mine that depicts that. We are lambs trying to look more like the big lamb Jesus.

Note Jesus didn't say he wanted converts. He didn't say he wanted church members. Jesus said he wants "Disciples" who look and live and act like him. **Jesus is the "way the truth and the life."** We need to do what he did, know the truths he taught us and teach them, and live his life of love. If Jesus the Christ was you, what would you do?

Note Jesus said to, **"Teach them to OBEY all I have commanded you."** He didn't say "teach them to understand" as in understanding theological concepts and intellectual doctrines and precepts. Jesus want's his disciples to have an "ethical" approach to life.

We are talking about not only inviting people into a room or home to watch a worship service, but we are inviting them into our lives and mission. I believe there will be ministries for us to do with them. I believe we will invite them into our missions for Agua Prieta, Family First, Impact, Rummage Sales, etc. I can see us joining with them in collecting and distributing clothing and other items.

I don't know completely where this is going. We as individuals and as a church will need to go round and round this circle many times before we get some of it figured out. But the circle is there to help us and encourage us individually as disciples to grow, and as a church to grow in making disciples. And most importantly Jesus will be with us to guide the way for he said, **"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Keep this idea in your thoughts and prayers. Seek God's word to you. Sincerely ask God, What are you saying to me and to us as a church and what are we going to do?

In Jesus' name

Amen